



CITY COUNCIL

Administrative Oversight and Land Use Committee

**Monday, November 17, 2008
Meeting Report**

Attendance: S. Marmarou, J. Waltman

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, T. Butler

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by S. Marmarou, Chair.

I. Interviews

Nilda Nieves (reappointment – Police Civil Service Board)

Mr. Marmarou questioned why Ms. Nieves was interested in continuing to serve in this position. Ms. Nieves described the role of the Police Civil Service Board and their interaction with the Police Diversity Board. She noted that candidates who fail the Civil Service test cannot claim that they were disqualified based on discrimination since the Police Civil Service Board has diverse membership. She noted her willingness to stand up for her beliefs.

The Administrative Oversight Committee agreed to recommend the reappointment of Ms. Nieves to the Police Civil Service Board.

Barry Pease (appointment – Animal Control Board)

Mr. Marmarou informed Mr. Pease that he had investigated his residency as a requirement for this position. He noted that it can be waived as he will be a representative of the Animal Rescue League.

Mr. Marmarou questioned why Mr. Pease was interested in serving on this Board. Mr. Pease indicated his background in law enforcement and his involvement with the Animal Rescue League Board. He noted his hope that the Board would discuss control and rescue issues. He also noted that things are going well with the new City contract and that they have excellent communication with the Police Department.

The Administrative Oversight Committee agreed to recommend the appointment of Mr. Pease to the Animal Control Board.

Carlos Torres (appointment – Fire Diversity Board)

Mr. Marmarou questioned why Mr. Torres was interested in serving on this Board. Mr. Torres noted that he is a lifelong City resident and current graduate of the Berks Hispanic Leadership Institute. It was at the Institute that he was encouraged to get involved in the community.

Mr. Waltman noted the importance of this Board as there is currently little or no diversity in the Fire Department. He noted the uniqueness of firefighters. He further noted his hope that the Board will identify obstacles to a diverse Fire Department and address them.

Mr. Marmarou gave a brief background on the volunteer history of the Reading Fire Department. He noted the need for diversity in the Department.

The Administrative Oversight Committee agreed to recommend the appointment of Mr. Torres to the Fire Diversity Board.

II. Standard Operating Procedure for Forced Entry Inspections

Mr. Waltman noted his hope that forced entry inspections were not performed. He noted the need to placard and vacate the property.

Mr. Marmarou requested research be performed to see if any other municipality performs forced entry inspections.

Mr. Waltman requested that this issue be discussed in Committee of the Whole with Brad Reinhart present.

Mr. Waltman questioned what training inspectors get and protection is available to them for forced entry situations. Mr. Marmarou indicated that a police officer should also be present and the officer should perform the forced entry.

III. City-wide Diversity Board ad hoc committee

This issue was not discussed.

IV. Handicapped Parking

This issue was discussed in a Committee of the Whole setting.

Ms. Butler reviewed her memo to Council. She noted that parking is included as an undue obstacle for housing for the disabled. She noted that the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) has declared Reading's handicapped parking policy unlawful. The PHRC does not care if others are inconvenienced. She also indicated that an unlimited number of spaces need to be installed to accommodate those with disabilities. She noted that the former procedure has been edited to a starting point to open discussions.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the PHRC's opinion is in writing. Ms. Butler noted that it is not.

Mr. Marmarou questioned why handicapped parking needs to be addressed. Ms. Butler noted that reasonable housing includes parking. The resident would continue to have an annual review of need and a letter from their doctor validating the need.

Ms. Kelleher suggested involving Police Chief Heim in the revision discussions.

Mr. Spencer noted his concern with case law.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that issuing an unlimited number of handicapped spaces is not practical. She noted problems with parking in the East Reading neighborhood and this would exacerbate those problems.

Mr. Marmarou noted his feeling that people will take advantage of the ability to get a parking space and the privilege will be abused. Ms. Butler called Council's attention to the penalty section of the revised policy. She again noted the need for discussions to work toward a revision that will have Council support.

Mr. Waltman noted his hope that a middle ground could be found. He noted his concern for the practicality of having unlimited handicapped parking. He noted that currently parking is already at a premium.

Ms. Butler described the current, broken process to apply for a handicapped space.

Mr. Sterner noted the increased cost of installing handicapped parking spaces and suggested the reinstitution of charging a fee. Ms. Butler indicated that a fee cannot be charged.

Ms. Katzenmoyer questioned if a space is automatic for residents with tags or license plates. Ms. Butler indicated that it is not; stipulations can be suggested.

It was questioned if renters can apply for a handicapped space. Ms. Butler indicated that they can.

Mr. Spencer suggested that discussions continue in the Public Safety Committee meetings.

The Administrative Oversight Committee adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Shelly Katzenmoyer,
Deputy City Clerk